



Operation Desert Strike



Special Deployment Issue, Volume 3

FIRST STRIKE REPORT

Troops Celebrate Palm Sunday, Keep Chin Straps Buttoned

Knowing that they might be called into action at any moment, First Strike troops celebrated Palm Sunday even as they prepared for their next mission. For now, the most important mission is maintaining the combat power of the force.

Since arriving in theater, First Strike maintenance crews have worked tirelessly in the motor pool, performing critical repairs and preparing 1-21's vehicles for the grueling weeks ahead. In an unforgiving environment such as the New Mexican desert, poor maintenance can prove to be an Achilles' heel even in the most disciplined units. The sands of Fort Bliss pose a formidable challenge to the strength of our maintenance program. From CPT

Chambers, CW2 Williams, and SFC Cliette to the battery motor sergeants, SFC Ivy, SSG Watson, SSG Rivera, the entire Battalion Maintenance Team will provide the critical maintenance expertise to keep our vehicles and equipment in the fight throughout the operation.

In an analogous role, medics keep our soldiers healthy despite the long hours and strenuous working conditions. The battalion Physician's Assistant, 1LT Seals, along with his aid station staff led by SSG Guzman, has provided continuous medical support to the soldiers of our battalion, beginning with the SRP process during pre-deployment week. "Nothing is more important than the health of our soldiers," said 1LT Seals. "We are committed to providing the care you need when you need it."

Elsewhere on the battlefield, 1LT Anthony Yeatts and the firing battery ammunition platoons led by two outstanding platoon sergeants, SFC Zito and SSG (P) Barajas, conducted



a highly successful ammunition resupply exercise Sunday according to Observer Controllers (OCs) from the DIVARTY white cell.

Soldiers from the communications section have kept commo lines open from the Dona Ana Base Camp and all units training in the surrounding area. In addition, retrans sections have facilitated long range communications, and the 'Spitfire' sections have enabled satellite communications as far as Fort Hood.

Finally, SFC Winfield and

the entire Food Service section have faithfully provided the battalion with two hot meals a day. PFC Mohler is one of the dedicated soldiers under SFC Winfield's leadership. He recently represented the First Team at the annual Culinary Arts Competition in Fort Lee. In the live cooking competition, he placed third with his "White Chocolate Bavarian Cake with Strawberry Glaze" entry. If an army indeed fights on its stomach, First Strike soldiers are well armed.

Corrections:

•Thanks goes to astute readers who pointed out that yesterday's edition mistakenly referred to Vice President Cheney as the Secretary of Defense--text should have read "former Secretary of Defense Cheney." Our humblest apologies to the honorable Mr. Cheney.

Editorial Staff

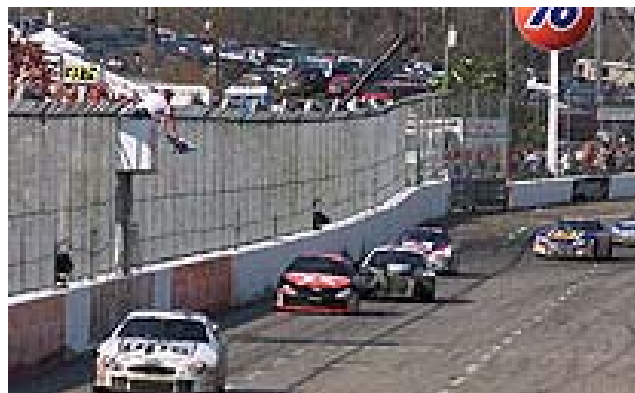
Sunday a Day of Close Finishes for Jarrett, Woods

Fresh tires provided the decisive edge for Dale Jarrett as he passed Ricky Rudd with ten laps remaining on his way to his first checkered flag at the Martinsville speedway Sunday afternoon.

With 135 laps remaining, sixth place Jarrett made the crucial decision to pit for new tires and fuel. Although he fell to eleventh after the pit, the new tires provided the necessary edge. Rudd felt he

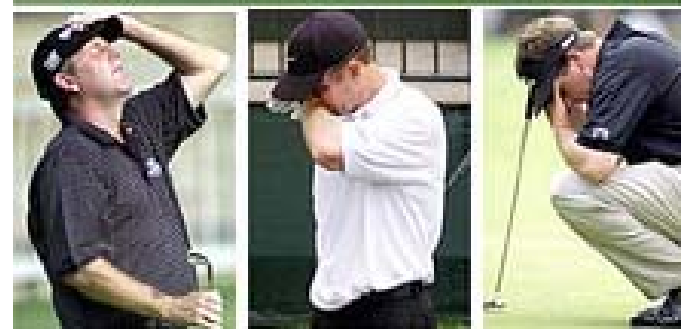
couldn't afford to relinquish the top spot he'd held for 50 laps for tires. "We couldn't come in at that point," Rudd said at the conclusion of the race (he finished second). "We either got outsmarted, or they made a luckier call. We were a sitting duck."

With this victory, Jarrett increased his points lead to 123 ahead of Jeff Gordon, who finished Sunday's race in the twelfth position.



Dale Jarrett, shown here crossing the finish line in Virginia 500, has now won on all three of Winston Cup's short tracks (Richmond, Bristol, and Martinsville). Photo courtesy of www.nascar.com

SPORTS In Brief



While Mark Calcavecchia, David Duval, and Phil Mickelson expressed the anguish of defeat, Tiger finished his 'master'ful victory with a flourish by turning in a birdie on the 18th hole at Augusta Sunday.

After a birdie putt on the 18th hole at Augusta, Tiger Woods covered his face with his trademark Nike cap and shed a few tears of joy. With a four under par 68, Woods secured his fourth straight majors title, and again set himself apart from the entire field of professional golfers.

Mark Calcavecchia, David Duval, and Phil Mickelson, shown at left, were visibly disappointed by another victory snatched away by the seemingly indomitable Woods. Said Duval, "To win majors, you have to have your game at the right place at the right time. There's an art to that. It's clear that somebody

has to pick up their game to beat Tiger."

Woods was exultant but humble after Sunday's victory. "I understand what I've accomplished. I've been around the block. I have a better appreciation for what this means. On what proved to be the critical hole of the final round, Tiger made a routine par while Mickelson and Duval each turned in a bogey. From there, the field watched Tiger pull away to an unbelievable fourth straight majors win. "As a kid, I dreamed about winning majors," Tiger said of his victory, "but not four in a row." For Tiger Woods, the dream has become a reality.

HAIKOU, China, April 9 — Two United States diplomats met with all 24 detained crew members of an American surveillance plane here this evening, as President Bush warned in Washington that United States relations with China could suffer if the crew were not freed soon. "Every day that goes by increases the potential that our relations with

China could be damaged," Mr. Bush told reporters in Washington. "And our hope is that this matter gets resolved quickly."

Mr. Bush said the United States was continuing to negotiate with the Chinese. "We're working behind the scenes, we've got every diplomatic channel open," he said. He was flanked as he spoke by

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Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld.

"All of us around this table understand diplomacy takes time," Mr. Bush added. "But there is a point, the longer it goes, there's a point at which our relations with China could become damaged."

Asked at a State Department news conference in Washington if the United States position on possible weapons sales to Taiwan could be affected by the Hainan situation, the spokesman Richard Boucher said, "We don't consult with China on Taiwan arms sales."

He said that was Washington's policy and "that remains the situation." The diplomats' meeting in Hainan was the fourth such meeting since the crew was taken into custody after their aircraft collided with a Chinese fighter jet over the South China Sea more than a week ago and made an emergency

landing on Hainan Island.

Unlike the three previous meetings, the diplomats did not have to meet with Chinese officials before seeing the crew. The Americans have asked for such "unfettered" access to the crew twice a day while Washington and Beijing negotiate their release. There was no immediate word on whether or not daily access had been granted.

Brig. Gen. Neal Sealock, the American military attaché at the embassy in Beijing, told reporters after the 40-minute meeting that the crew was in "extremely high spirits" and that they were living in an air-conditioned "hotel-like setting."

He said the visit confirmed that they were receiving e-mails, toiletries and other provisions and were living in facilities similar to officers' quarters.

As has been the case after past meetings, the general declined to

Collision in South China Sea

A United States Navy spy plane collided with a Chinese fighter jet on Sunday. The American plane is at an airbase in Lingshui, and the Chinese jet is still missing.



elaborate on the substance of the meeting and would not take questions from the crowd of reporters awaiting the crew's release at a hotel where the diplomats are staying. He was accompanied at his meeting with the crew, as in the previous visits, by Ted Gong, a consular official at the United States Consulate in Guangzhou. China is demanding that the

United States apologize for the midair collision and Washington refuses. The pilot of the Chinese fighter jet, which crashed into the sea after the collision, is missing and presumed dead.

Article Courtesy of NY Times Online authored by Craig T. Smith, Staff Writer



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